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Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka (Uganda)

Contents

Agenda item 85: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the
Occupied Territories

Organization of work

Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space
(continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/453, A/55/261-265, A/55/373 and Add.1, A/55/392-S/2000/874, A/55/432-S/2000/921, A/55/466-S/2000/971, A/55/474-S/2000/984, A/55/490-S/2000/993; A/C.4/55/L.17-L.21)

1. **Mr. de Saram** (Sri Lanka), introducing, in his capacity as its Chairman, the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/453), said that the Special Committee had considered its programme of work in March 2000, and between 19 and 31 May 2000 its members had visited Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to hear statements from persons who were knowledgeable as to conditions in the occupied territories. The Special Committee had been unable to visit the occupied territories, although at its meetings it had heard from a number of Israeli citizens concerned with human rights issues in the occupied territories. In its work, the Special Committee had also made use of newspaper reports published in the occupied territories. Other materials received by the Special Committee were listed in the annexes to its report.

2. Having considered all the information and materials received, the Special Committee, as in previous years, had reached the conclusion that in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan an extensive system of Israeli laws and regulations, as well as administrative measures and procedures, had been introduced which to a substantial degree were discriminatory with regard to the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories and substantially curtailed important aspects of their lives. Some of the particular aspects of the occupation, on which persons heard by the Committee had focused attention, were set out in the relevant sections of the report of the Special Committee.

3. Some of the more topical issues connected with the occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem were the following: the building of new and the expansion of existing settlements and the fact that Israeli settlers were armed; bypass roads used only by

settlers to connect one settlement with another; a general fragmentation of land as a consequence of the establishment of settlements and the building of bypass roads and quarries; the negative environmental effects on surrounding lands of the establishment of settlements, usually on high land; heightened tension and violence in connection with the establishment of settlements; the restriction on freedom of movement within and between Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, particularly when a system of closures applied to Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which generally disrupted the Palestinian economy and created major problems for the Palestinian population, especially in emergency situations; restrictions on the construction or expansion of Palestinian housing and major delays and difficulties in obtaining authorizations for carrying out such work; the demolition of houses constructed or expanded without authorization; unjust distribution of water resources in conditions of acute shortage; restriction on the right to reside in East Jerusalem and the negative consequences of such a policy for the everyday lives of Palestinians and for the demographic composition of the population of East Jerusalem; alteration of the boundaries of East Jerusalem and the establishment of settlements within or in close proximity to East Jerusalem; the system of detention, the conditions of detention and the arbitrary extension of periods of detention and the use of physical coercion in interrogations despite prohibition of that practice by the Supreme Court of Israel.

4. Notwithstanding such restrictions and infringements in occupied Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Special Committee, like many others at the United Nations, still hoped that developments in the peace process and the meetings between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak, with the personal involvement of President Clinton, might lead in the not too distant future to a tangible improvement in the situation of the population of those territories. However, in the closing days of September 2000, tragic events had occurred in East Jerusalem which had led to a general outbreak of violence. In paragraphs 34 and 35 of its report, the Special Committee had noted those occurrences, and also the receipt of a communication from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, drawing attention to the eruption of violence, the deaths of civilians, including children, and the disproportionate use of force by the occupying

authorities and requesting an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the developing situation.

5. On 7 October 2000, the Security Council had adopted resolution 1322 (2000) in which it had, *inter alia*, expressed deep concern at the tragic events that had taken place since 28 September leading to numerous deaths and injuries, mostly among Palestinians. The continuance of those tragic events and loss of life, mostly of Palestinians, during the past several weeks in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem was deeply regrettable.

6. Turning to the sections of the report dealing with the occupied Syrian Golan, which was occupied by Israel in 1967 and "annexed" in 1981, he said that the General Assembly and the Security Council regarded the annexation as illegal and null and void. The report of the Special Committee made reference to particular aspects of the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, such as the increase in the number of settlers and the expansion of existing settlements; the deliberate alteration of the demographic composition of the population of the occupied Golan, with undesirable consequences for the land and the environment; the unfair distribution of water resources, which were controlled by the Israeli authorities; the disadvantageous economic situation of the Syrian population of the Golan, which was engaged mainly in agriculture, in relation to the settlers; the lack of adequate employment opportunities in the occupied Golan, the low prices for agricultural produce and the high taxes, inadequate health care and the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention; the tense relations between the settlers, who were armed, and the Syrian population; attempts to change the identity and culture of the Syrians living in the occupied territories by the misrepresentation of Syrian culture and history and the marginalization of the Syrian Arab heritage and language; the cultural and environmental damage caused by the excavation of archaeological sites and the removal of antiquities from the occupied Golan; the serious problem of land mines, which represented a grave hazard, especially for children; the restriction on freedom of movement, which hindered normal social communication between relatives, friends and colleagues, leading in many cases to the fragmentation and long-term separation of families.

7. In conclusion, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee, he expressed the hope that there would soon be a return to dialogue and the peace

process. The direct and indirect consequences of a general occupation of territories for such a long period of time had a serious negative effect across the entire spectrum of human relationships, both between and among the occupied and the occupiers.

8. **Ms. Abdelhady Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) expressed the appreciation of her delegation to the members of the Special Committee for their constant efforts. In spite of certain statements in recent past sessions to the effect that the Special Committee was an anachronism, the tragic events and the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, once more confirmed that its mandate was both appropriate and timely. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands had been continuing for more than three decades, and the violation by the occupying Power of the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories remained a daily occurrence.

9. It was the Israeli occupation which was an anachronism, representing as it did a glaring anomaly on the landscape of the international community as it entered the twenty-first century. The occupation was an aberration which should long ago have been relegated to the dustbin of historical transgressions against humanity. It was from the Israeli occupation that all other violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories arose. The practices and policies of Israel were a constant reminder of the injustice, cruelty and extreme difficulties encountered by the Arab population under the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan, in violation of international law and international humanitarian law. Israeli violations were continuing despite their illegality, despite the international consensus against the occupation and the policies and practices associated with it, and despite countless resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly in that regard. The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was a stark reminder of that fact.

10. At a time when the entire international community hoped for an end to the Israeli occupation through the conclusion of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, the situation had deteriorated dramatically. The deterioration had come about because of the provocation which had occurred on 28 September 2000 at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in

occupied East Jerusalem, which had been followed by an extreme military response by the Israeli occupying forces to protests by the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The most recent Israeli military campaign had been characterized by the use by Israel of live ammunition and heavy weaponry against the civilian population of the occupied territories. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying army against Palestinian civilians in the past five weeks had led to the wilful killing of more than 150 Palestinians and the wounding of thousands more. Many people believed that such gross violations of human rights by the occupying Power could be regarded as war crimes. Over one third of the victims were children under 18 years of age.

11. Turning to the reports submitted by the Special Committee, she emphasized that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was still very tense because of the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The reports of the Special Committee made it clear that Israel, as the occupying Power, was continuing to commit numerous breaches of international law and international humanitarian law in the occupied territory. Such violations included frequent instances of collective punishment of the Palestinian population. The confiscation of land, the exploitation of water resources and the demolition of houses were continuing. There were frequent restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians and Palestinian goods within the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and between parts of that territory and on entry to and exit from it. That included the difficulties associated with the operation of the safe passage opened the previous year between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During the period covered by the report, there had been closures of the occupied territories which had practically become permanent in recent weeks. The Palestinians experienced continuing difficulties as a result of the obstacles placed in their way by the occupying authorities with regard to the issue of identity cards and travel permits. Moreover, the practice of administrative detention, harassment, physical mistreatment and torture of Palestinians in Israeli jails persisted.

12. As noted in the reports of the Special Committee, illegal colonial settlement activities were continuing at a feverish pace, entailing countless violations of

international law and international humanitarian law; they included the construction of new dwellings, the expansion of existing settlements, the confiscation of new land for the building of bypass roads, land seizures by Israeli settlers, including hilltop outposts, and, in recent months, the fortification of settlements with light and heavy equipment and weaponry. Such practices were part of Israel's ongoing attempts to change the status of the occupied territory or parts of it and to change the demographic composition of the territory. Israel had continued that policy regardless of the peace process.

13. Changing the legal status, character and demographic composition of occupied East Jerusalem was a central element of the Israeli campaign to Judaize the territory with a view to prejudicing its final status. The above-mentioned Israeli practices were in serious violation of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which was applicable to all of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The applicability of that Convention had been reaffirmed in 26 Security Council resolutions and in a multitude of resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. The international community must undertake serious efforts to ensure universal respect for international law and international humanitarian law in all circumstances and cases. She reiterated that the Israeli Government must accept the *de jure* applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and fully respect and comply with its provisions.

14. It was to be hoped that the current tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, would improve. In order for that to happen, the Israeli occupying army must halt the excessive and indiscriminate use of force against Palestinian civilians and withdraw its forces from Palestinian cities, villages and camps. That alone could pave the way for the genuine resumption of the peace process. Lastly, she stressed the relevance of the work of the Special Committee, which was an integral part of the work of the United Nations as it carried out its permanent responsibility to resolve the question of Palestine.

15. **Mr. Al-Absi** (United Arab Emirates) expressed appreciation to the Special Committee for its report, which reflected the real state of affairs with regard to violations of the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

16. In the past few months the world had witnessed massive violence on the part of Israeli forces against defenceless Palestinians, including women, old people and children. Moreover, Israel was carrying out a policy of massive human rights violations, which was forcing the Palestinians to abandon those territories. The Israeli Government stubbornly refused to comply with its responsibilities under the relevant international resolutions and the agreements signed with the Palestinian side.

17. Israel was further intensifying its inhumane policy, which was designed to perpetuate the occupation and exploitation of the Palestinian territories and to change their legal and demographic status. That applied in particular to Jerusalem, which occupied a special place in the history and religion of the Palestinian people.

18. The statistical data contained in the report, and the mass-media accounts of Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, showed the aggressive intention of the Israeli Government to perpetuate the occupation of Palestinian towns, particularly Jerusalem. For example, the Israeli plans for building settlements on the West Bank went counter to Israel's obligation to curb budgetary expenditures for such purposes. In addition, Israel was carrying out a policy of Judaization of the Palestinian territories. It exploited the natural resources of the Palestinians and discarded toxic wastes. Such a policy was completely contrary to international law, the international legal order, and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

19. The foregoing meant that the international community, as embodied in the United Nations, must put an end to such glaring violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. Israel, as the occupying Power, must end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the occupied Arab Golan. His Government also drew attention to the need to establish an international mechanism for the defence of the Palestinian people and an independent fact-finding commission that would carry out the necessary investigations and call the guilty to account.

20. It was to be hoped that the international community would pursue its efforts in the framework of the Special Committee until the occupation had finally ended. A just and final settlement would be possible only after Israel had put an end to the occupation of Arab territories and had demolished the

settlements, and the Palestinians had exercised their right to self-determination on the basis of the land-for-peace principle.

21. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), speaking on a point of order, requested the speaker to adhere to the established rules.

22. **Ms. Abercrombie-Winstanley** (United States of America) said that in the view of her Government, the resolutions presented under agenda item 85 contained outdated formulations that failed to support the peace process. While the difficulties on the road to peace could not be ignored, the accomplishments to date should not be minimized. The parties were taking steps to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement of 17 October 2000 and they should be encouraged to implement it fully.

23. Her delegation strongly urged Member States to delete the standard call for the Special Committee to continue its work and report in the following year. The Committee's existence was inconsistent with the joint efforts of Israel and the Palestinians to resolve their differences. Its "work" did nothing to support the cause of peace. It was necessary to look for opportunities to strengthen an atmosphere of reconciliation between the parties in order to attain the goal shared by all, namely, a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

24. Her Government, while reaffirming its view that the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 applied to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, nonetheless firmly opposed the specific references to Jerusalem in the resolutions concerned. Such references were part of an inappropriate attempt to prejudge arrangements which in reality could be achieved only through direct negotiations between the parties.

25. **Mr. Al-Hadidi** (Jordan) said that his delegation had carefully studied the report submitted by the Special Committee. It was concerned that, year in and year out, Israel was continuing with its practice vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which would aggravate the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories and was inflicting damage on their inhabitants.

26. Israel was pursuing a settlements construction policy in the West Bank and Jerusalem, violating the provisions of international resolutions concerning the Palestinian territories. Those actions were illegal and undermined the bases of the peace negotiations. The city of Jerusalem was the key to solving the problem of

establishing peace, and a settlement had to be based on the principle that East Jerusalem was Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) on Palestinian sovereignty should be applied, so that East Jerusalem could become the capital of an independent Palestinian State.

27. It was essential to defend the rights of Arabs and Muslims to their holy places, and establishment of Israeli sovereignty over that territory, which must be open to persons of all faiths, was not permissible.

28. The Government of Jordan condemned the crimes of the occupying power and demanded that Israel withdraw its forces from occupied territories in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) on the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State. Jordan had always promoted the establishment of peace in that long-suffering region. It had accordingly taken part in the Madrid peace negotiations with Israel, as a result of which a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan had been signed. Jordan hoped that that treaty would become the first step towards the establishment of peace in the region.

29. For peace in the Middle East to be durable, it had to be universal. That meant that the occupied Golan had to be returned to the Syrian Arab Republic in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Palliatives were not appropriate: there had to be a radical solution to the problem and the resolutions of the international community had to be implemented in the interests of the establishment of peace. The establishment of peace was impossible without a solution of the Palestinian problem, but a just and final settlement would in its turn give the Palestinians the opportunity to strive for autonomy and acquire the right to self-determination in its own national territory, which would serve the interests of the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

30. **Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) said that, in the current situation, when Israeli aggression was threatening to wipe out the achievements of the peace process in the region, the Special Committee's work acquired even greater importance for the achievement of full respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people and of all Arabs in the occupied territories.

31. A few days previously, the Cuban delegation had stated in the Security Council that, if the United Nations did not take effective measures to revive the

peace process and prevent provocative acts on the part of those Israeli circles which opposed a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, it would merely be setting the stage for the next crisis. Events had confirmed how right those words had been. The rocket attacks in Ramallah and Gaza and the gross violence towards the Palestinian population of the occupied territories not only represented yet another glaring and mass violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people but also showed that Israel was not at all interested in a peaceful, just and final settlement of the Middle East conflict. The norms of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations were once again being flouted. The human rights of the entire population were being violated in the grossest manner, and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and resolutions concerning its applicability to the occupied Arab territories were as usual not being implemented.

32. The Special Committee regularly presented the General Assembly with extensive information concerning the flouting of the most elementary rights of the Palestinian people, the Syrian population of the occupied Golan and of other Arabs in the occupied territories. The documents submitted gave details of the Israeli policy of construction of settlements, confiscation of land, closing of territories, harsh treatment of prisoners, withdrawal of residents' permits for Jerusalem, and also the problems of water supply and sanitation in the occupied territories and other problems which were part of everyday life for the population of the occupied territories. In light of that, it was hardly surprising that for so many years the Government of Israel had not allowed representatives of the Special Committee to visit the territories.

33. The delegation of Cuba, as it had in the past, demanded cessation of the crimes and guarantees of full respect for all the human rights of the Palestinian people and the rest of the Arabs in the occupied territories. Cuba fully shared the international community's desire for a solution of the problems of the Middle East, for which one prerequisite was a final settlement of the Palestinian problem as the pivotal element in the Middle East crisis. A just and lasting peace was unthinkable without full implementation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and of the Arabs living under occupation.

34. At the beginning of the previous decade, there had been signs in the Middle East of very hopeful progress towards peace — the Madrid peace

conference, the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and later the signing of the Wye River Accords. However, that negotiating process had been undermined, and all the hopes of the international community had collapsed after ultra-right-wing forces had launched their provocative actions and Israel had unleashed aggression against the Palestinian people. In that regard, the delegation of Cuba was convinced that the Special Committee should continue its important work until a final settlement was reached and the most elementary rights of the Palestinian people and of the other Arabs in the occupied territories were fully achieved.

35. Cuba once again expressed its unqualified support for the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and sovereign State with its capital in East Jerusalem. Cuba demanded the return of all Arab territories occupied by Israel, reaffirmed the illegal nature of Israeli settlements built in the occupied Arab territories, and gave an assurance to the Arabs and the Syrian and Palestinian peoples that the Cuban people were, as always, in full solidarity with their cause.

36. **Mr Aboulgheit** (Egypt) said that his delegation was in favour of the Special Committee continuing its work as long as there was no final settlement of the conflict or resolution of the Palestinian problem. Its report gave a disquieting picture of the practices and policies which had prompted Israel's actions in the territories it had occupied since 1967.

37. Recently, the international media had been full of information about the bloody events in the occupied Palestinian territories. Those events were the outcome of provocative visits by the leader of the Israeli opposition party to the area of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The reports graphically showed that the Palestinian people was continuing to suffer from the consequences of the cruel, unjust and humiliating occupation, while being asked at the negotiating table to make concessions. The Palestinian people's dignity was being trampled upon and it was being repressed, yet the Palestinians were not allowed even to express their anger and outrage at what was going on.

38. Much had been written about the struggle of peoples against colonialism, and much renown attached to the fate of heroes of the national liberation struggle who had sacrificed their lives so that future generations

could live in freedom and dignity. The struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation was a legitimate and just struggle of the same kind. The only logical outcome was an end to the Israeli occupation. To ignore that would make the process more painful for everyone.

39. His delegation wished to draw attention to certain points. First, the Palestinian people had an inalienable right to self-determination and the creation of its own independent State throughout its occupied territory, with its capital in East Jerusalem. That was the essence of the peace process and of the intifada. Second, the repressive measures by Israel against the Palestinian population and the use of excessive force were a gross abuse of human rights and also of the obligations flowing from the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Third, the recent events clearly showed that the reason for the persisting explosive situation was the continuing presence of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The way to a solution of the problem lay in the return of the settlers to Israel.

40. Finally, all that confirmed the relevance of the demands made at the Cairo high-level meeting of Arab countries on 21-22 October for the creation of a United Nations force for a certain period of time to protect the Palestinian population, so that no more Palestinians need perish in clashes with the armed occupation forces.

41. No less serious was the practice of Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan, where the building of Israeli settlements was continuing. Egypt declared its support for the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan, and its solidarity with them. Israel must realize that the attainment of peace in the Middle East was indissolubly bound up with the achievement of a just and final settlement of the Palestinian question and an end to arbitrary rule, which left no room for peace and no hope for those seeking to establish it in the region.

42. **Mr. Hafiana** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed the hope that the work of the Special Committee would continue and be stepped up, especially in view of the campaign of repression unleashed by the occupation forces against the population of the occupied territories, the first victims of which were children. The current actions of the occupying Power were merely a continuation of Israel's standard policy of terrorizing the Palestinians and driving them out of their territory.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian people was resisting; it was living and struggling to preserve its dignity and uniqueness and its land, on which it had lived for thousands of years and from which the Israeli settlers were trying to expel it.

43. The acts recently carried out by the occupying authorities had been provoked by the visit of the terrorist Sharon to Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The victims of those acts, perpetrated with the use of modern weaponry, were peaceful Palestinians demanding that the agreements reached in Oslo, and subsequent understandings, should be observed, that peace and stability should be established in their land and that those guilty of bloody crimes should be prosecuted.

44. His delegation called upon the Special Committee to continue its work, and appealed to the international community to provide material support for the Committee to enable it to carry out the tasks before it.

45. In conclusion, his delegation supported the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland, and its right to self-determination and to the creation of an independent State on the entire territory belonging to it. The international community must take all necessary steps to put an end to any action by the occupying Israeli forces against the Palestinian population. The conscience of the international community must not permit the continuation of such a policy against the unarmed civilian Palestinian population, which had suffered repression for over half a century.

46. **Ms Naidoo** (South Africa) said that South Africa firmly believed that it remained the permanent responsibility of the United Nations to be fully engaged with the Palestinian question until a definitive solution was achieved. The important role played by the Secretary-General at the recent summit meeting at Sharm Al-Sheikh reaffirmed the primacy of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

47. At the summit meeting held in South Africa in 1998, the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement had reaffirmed the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the entire occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In that regard, her delegation called for the full and speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) of 7 October 2000, which reiterated the call to Israel to abide strictly by its legal obligations under that Convention. Closures of territory, blockades and restrictions on the freedom of movement of people

and goods imposed by Israel had resulted in the economic suffocation of the Palestinian people. It was incumbent upon the United Nations to adopt measures to protect the Palestinian people and to ensure that the actions which were exacerbating their suffering ceased.

48. The question of Palestine constituted the nucleus of the Middle East conflict. The achievement of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the creation of an independent State was pivotal to the achievement of a sustained and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The only means of securing lasting peace, security and stability in the region lay through peaceful negotiations. In that regard, her delegation urged the parties to take the necessary steps to restore calm and thereby to create an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of negotiations. At their meeting in New York in September 2000, the Ministers of the non-aligned countries had reaffirmed their determination to strive actively towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The most important condition for moving the peace process forward was to observe the principle of "land for peace".

49. **Mr. Obadi** (Yemen) said that for several weeks the world had been witnessing a crime of mass destruction being committed against the Palestinian people, in which the main victims were children, women and the elderly. As a result of that aggressive show of force by Israel in the occupied Arab territories, 182 people had already died and thousands had been wounded. The Israeli forces, with tanks, guns, helicopters and rockets, were occupying Palestinian towns and villages, obstructing any progress on the road to a just and lasting peace. With its disproportionate use of force, Israel was violating the norms of international humanitarian law and its obligations under the peace agreement, as well as the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the relevant Security Council resolutions and resolution ES-10/7 adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session.

50. The international community must condemn Israel's criminal acts against the Arab civilian population. Israel was making a mistake if it thought that brute force could stop the uprising of the Palestinian people defending its rights and could break its will. Only a complete withdrawal by Israel from all territories, including Jerusalem, could permit the

achievement of peaceful coexistence and secure a peaceful future for the entire region.

51. The international community must force Israel to acknowledge the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Instead of defending the civilian population, Israel was restricting the movement of people and goods, imposing a curfew and blockading Palestinian territories. Israel must be made to fulfil the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and of General Assembly resolution 54/79. Contrary to the spirit and letter of the relevant United Nations resolutions confirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of lands by force, Israel was continuing the construction of settlements in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan and the confiscation of new lands belonging to the Palestinian administration. By its actions Israel was jeopardizing the continuation of the peace process and might once again create an atmosphere of violence, disorder and instability in the region.

52. The international community had the right to exert pressure on Israel to discontinue its occupation, and to take practical measures to secure implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 904 (1994) regarding the confiscation of arms from Israeli settlers.

53. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Israel had declared war on the Palestinians, a war in which more than 150 people had been killed in the past four weeks. It had given Amnesty International grounds for describing Israel's actions as war crimes. However, the Israeli leadership was stubbornly continuing its bloody policy and its attempts to mislead world public opinion by using its dominance of the mass media. The whole world had seen a child killed at the hands of Israeli soldiers and, although television camera lenses had not captured the dozens of other children being killed, the world was aware of the scale of the suffering afflicting the Palestinians, of their just struggle, and of the reprisals carried out by the Israelis with the aim of destroying them and suppressing their legitimate aspiration to freedom and realization of their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their land.

54. Israel was using old and new methods in its policy, continuing environmental crimes: over the past few days, thousands of olive trees had been uprooted in

the West Bank, representing an environmental and humanitarian disaster.

55. The Chairman and other members of the Special Committee, who had drawn up an impartial, detailed and objective report, were deserving of gratitude. In that connection it was necessary to emphasize the enduring and increasing topicality of the Special Committee's work, for only with its help could the international community be made aware of Israel's crimes in the occupied Arab territories. Any attempt to weaken the Special Committee would amount to a cover-up of the continuing Israeli policy of violating the legitimate rights of the Arab population in the occupied territories and to inadmissible faint-heartedness in the face of monstrous violations of human rights. Ever since the Special Committee had been established, Israel had refused to recognize it and to cooperate with it so long as the Special Committee was entrusted with exposing Israel's policy of terror towards the Arab population and the flagrant violations of the norms of international law committed by Israel.

56. Following its occupation of the Syrian Golan, Israel had adopted legislative and other measures to Judaize the region, establishing settlements and attracting settlers from all over the world. Since 1967, Israel had been violating all the United Nations resolutions and international treaties. The occupying forces had expelled the Syrian Arab population from 244 towns, settlements, villages and farms, confiscated water resources and destroyed agricultural lands. The construction of new and the expansion of existing Israeli settlements, currently numbering about 40, was continuing in the Syrian Golan. Some 500,000 Syrian refugees, expelled from the Golan, were still awaiting the opportunity to return to their homes and land.

57. All that ran counter to the peace process, which was based on the condition that Israeli forces should withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The Israeli occupation authorities, which had not limited themselves to confiscating 96 per cent of the land in the Golan, had blockaded the remaining five villages, restricting their opportunities for expansion by introducing complicated procedures involving building permits as well as excessive taxation. The Israeli occupation authorities, and particularly the armed forces, had taken a number of measures which were destructive of the environment in the occupied part of the Golan. Two years previously, international experts had reported that Israel had dumped 52 tonnes of

chemical and nuclear waste in the occupied Arab territories. That was fraught with environmental disaster for the Middle East.

58. Israel's policy towards the population of the occupied Syrian Golan took various forms: detentions, torture, house arrests and limitation of the right of Syrian nationals to visit their families in the Syrian Arab Republic. Dozens of Syrian nationals were being held in Israel prisons and camps in the most inhuman conditions.

59. In the light of those generally known facts, the question inevitably arose of the fate of the peace process and one of its basic principles — the principle of "land for peace". The behaviour of Israel obviously showed that it desired such peace, which would be in its interests and would make it possible to maintain the occupation and control of the Syrian Golan and the other occupied Arab territories. In order to achieve that aim, Israel was pursuing a policy of violating basic human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law. Despite the peace slogans proclaimed by the present Israeli Government, the Israeli mass media were reporting new plans for building settlements and attracting settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan. That was surprising, as the Israeli leaders knew very well that the occupation, oppression and injustice could not continue and that the occupied Golan was an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic, which would be returned to that country.

60. In its communiqué of 27 August 1998, the European Union had called on Israel to stop the expansion of settlements into the occupied Syrian Golan, as that policy cast doubt on Israel's desire for peace. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and France had issued a communiqué confirming that Israel's policy violated the norms of international law and was not furthering the cause of peace.

61. Peace was incompatible with Israel's current demonstration of force, in which Palestinians were being killed who were not guilty of anything. His country again confirmed its willingness to work for a lasting and just peace on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the principle of "land for peace". That should guarantee the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Syrian Golan and from the occupied Palestinian territories, the completion of their withdrawal from the Lebanese

territories and the release of the Lebanese held in Israeli jails. In order to achieve a lasting and just peace, Israel should cease the activities described in the report of the Special Committee.

62. In the light of the foregoing, the international community, and in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, should not close their eyes to the crimes being committed on a daily basis by Israel in the occupied Arab territories. Those criminal actions should be firmly condemned. Pressure should be exerted on the Government of Israel to cease its actions, which were a real threat to peace and security in the region and in the whole world.

63. **Mr. Al-Murri** (Qatar) said that the struggling Palestinian people was facing the inhuman actions of Israel, which was resorting to oppression and barbarity at a time when the international community was entering a new phase — a phase of dialogue and mutual understanding as means of settling disputes. The report of the Special Committee referred to the harsh sufferings which the occupying Power, in contravention of international law, was inflicting on the Palestinian people and other Arab civilians in the occupied territories. He emphasized the full applicability to Israel of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which, however, the occupying Power was blatantly violating. The report clearly indicated the scale of the tortures, massacres and humiliations to which prisoners in Israel were subjected, although in 1991 Israel had ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

64. The policy of confiscating land, destroying homes, building settlements, and de-Arabization, which was referred to in the report, revealed Israel's true intentions in relation to the peace process, which had come to a halt because of the policy of the Israeli leaders. In that connection, the international community had to exert pressure on the Government of Israel to convince it to stop the construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, where the land was meant for the Palestinian people. The Qatar delegation again confirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to return to its land.

65. Qatar had repeatedly stated that a lasting peace in the Middle East could be achieved only by means of a peaceful and comprehensive settlement, complete withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories

occupied in 1967, including the Syrian Golan, and realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to form an independent State.

66. In view of the explosive situation that had developed and the many victims on the Palestinian side, the Qatar Government expressed its willingness to assume part of the expenses of the Special Rapporteur sent to the region by the Commission on Human Rights to study the actual situation. That was an indication that Qatar was continuing its policy of working towards peace in the Middle East. The initiative was in harmony with the Arab position of a strategic approach to peace.

67. Until Israel ceased its aggression and fulfilled its obligations in connection with the Middle East peace process in relation to both Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations should remain the forum in which the international community would condemn that aggression.

68. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that, as shown by the periodic report of the Special Committee (A/55/373), Israel was defying the will of the international community. As long as the Israeli occupation was maintained and the gross violations of the rights of the Palestinian people by the occupying Power continued, the Special Committee should continue to discharge its mandate in connection with the Palestinian question.

69. The Israeli authorities were still carrying out illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. They were building illegal settlements and by-pass roads, confiscating land, demolishing houses, imposing severe restrictions on freedom of movement, exploiting and stealing natural resources, transferring more Israeli settlers, and detaining thousands of Palestinians and scores of Lebanese in Israeli prisons. Those actions were accompanied by violence and atrocities committed by armed Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians.

70. The Palestinians were resisting the occupation. They were defending their inalienable national rights and were defending their holy sites in East Jerusalem. Israel was trying to shift the blame onto the Palestinian side, claiming that the Palestinian Authority had provoked its citizens. But Israel was clearly responsible for the bloody events that were taking place.

71. Referring to the Internet edition of *The Jerusalem Post* of 12 September 2000, he pointed out that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories had been strengthening their defences. The objective of the visit by Ariel Sharon to the Haram al-Sharif had been to make the situation explode in the occupied Palestinian territory and to prevent continuation of the peace process and implementation of all the international resolutions obligating Israel to withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967.

72. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had consistently supported the Palestinian people in its just struggle to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to regain its inalienable rights. OIC also supported the Lebanese Government's insistence on the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Lebanese territory, including the Shaba farms, and the release of all Lebanese citizens from Israeli jails. OIC again reaffirmed that the Israeli policy of annexation and construction of illegal settlements on the Syrian Golan constituted a grave violation of international law.

73. Peace in the Middle East could be achieved only with complete Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people.

74. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, briefly informed the members of the Committee of the contents of an official communication from the Prime Minister of Israel, which would soon be sent to the capitals of many countries. The communication stated that, since the recent eruption of the violence, Israel had attempted time and again to stabilize the situation and put an end to it so as to pave the way for the quick resumption of the peace negotiations. Nonetheless, for over a month it had witnessed an orchestrated attempt by the Palestinian authority to replace the peace process with an armed struggle.

75. At the Camp David Summit, the present Israeli Government had been prepared to look into ideas which had never been discussed by previous Governments. The Palestinian side had not only avoided discussing those ideas, but had chosen a different path altogether. Israel had fulfilled ahead of schedule the obligations it had undertaken in Paris, in Sharm-el-Sheikh and at the recent meeting between Chairman Arafat and Minister Peres in Gaza.

Unfortunately the sole response on the part of the Palestinian side had been a continuation of the violence. The Arafat-Peres agreement had not been successful on the ground.

76. Every day, there were dozens of instances in which Palestinians (including the security forces and the Tanzim, who were not allowed to carry arms under agreements between Israel and the Palestinians) used live ammunition against Israeli soldiers, peaceful civilians, means of transport and civilian targets. A car bomb had recently exploded near a Jerusalem market, killing two persons and wounding ten others. Responsibility for the attack had been claimed by the Palestinian "Islamic Jihad" group. That had been a direct result of a massive release of that organization's operatives from Palestinian prisons, along with members of "Hamas". The car bomb attack was but one of a series of incidents aimed at creating tension in the Jerusalem area. Those incidents had been instigated by the Palestinian authority or by its activities, which had forced Israel to respond, with restraint, by attacking the empty offices of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus. Unfortunately, the military escalation by the Palestinian side had transformed what it called the intifada into a limited war.

77. Despite those attacks, Israel was acting with the utmost restraint. For example, in all the helicopter attacks the Israeli forces tried to avoid fatalities and issued early warnings. Israel's response had been measured, proportionate and cautious.

78. In Israel's opinion, Chairman Arafat was not exerting all his power to stop the violence. He was thus not only violating his agreement with Minister Peres; he was also giving a "green light" to continue along the same path. For example, members of the Tanzim had openly declared that they did not intend to halt the violence. The situation had undoubtedly been enflamed by recent declarations by Chairman Arafat, for instance, that the intifada would continue until the liberation of Jerusalem. The Chairman was using false claims about Israel's actions which he expressed to his public and to the world as a part of his strategy. Israel abided by all its commitments. If the international community stood idly by as the Palestinians continued to violate prior agreements, then the Palestinians could only construe that as encouragement to commit more violence.

79. Despite all the disturbances, Israel had continually provided for supplies of food and humanitarian aid. The Government of Israel had issued clear orders not to touch public utilities. Clearly, in a time of violence some local incidents might occur, but Israel was committed to dealing with them immediately. Israel took all necessary measures to prevent any damage to Islamic religious sites. At the same time, Israel expected the Palestinian Authority to adopt a similar approach to Jewish religious sites.

80. The parties currently found themselves at a crossroads. They could resume negotiations, which, based on the ideas discussed at Camp David, would lead to the creation of a viable Palestinian State. The other route was that of violence and unilateral Palestinian action, which was most likely to lead to the creation of a source of continuous instability in the region capable of threatening moderate neighbouring countries, regional stability and global interests. Israel had been ready to do whatever was needed to resume negotiations. Regrettably, Chairman Arafat was by all appearances choosing the unilateral route, coupled with violence. In that case Israel would be forced to take measures to defend its own interests.

81. It was incumbent upon the international community to indicate to Chairman Arafat the cost of his deeds and to point out to him that the only possible route was that which led to an honourable and agreed birth of a Palestinian State. The role of the international community should go beyond responding to the current situation and should include dealing with the basic causes of the crisis. Israel called on the international community to secure from Chairman Arafat an official statement regarding his commitments and an undertaking to refrain from unilateral actions.

82. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted with regret that the representative of Israel, on the pretext of exercising his right of reply, had instead made a statement to the Committee. Once again the Committee had been forced to listen to Israeli fabrications concerning the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Accusations that the Palestinian leadership had supposedly "instigated" the current situation did not correspond to reality and had been made in order to divert attention from the clear role of Israel in provoking the situation and fanning its flames by disproportionate use of force against the civilian Palestinian population. The

attempts of the representative of Israel to have everyone believe that Israel's current actions were directed at the restoration of peace and order were laughable. The Palestinian delegation considered that the use of live ammunition against the civilian population, leading to daily loss of life, was hardly conducive to the restoration of peace and order.

Organization of work

83. The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to draft resolutions A/C.4/55/L.10-L.16 on agenda item 84, and draft resolutions A/C.4/55/L.17-L.21 on agenda item 85. Interested delegations had requested a postponement of decisions on those draft resolutions. With the Committee's agreement, he suggested that the request should be granted.

84. *It was so decided.*

85. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) recalled that two days of meetings had been allocated for agenda item 86 (Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects). Under the new agreement governing relations between the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations and the General Assembly, consideration of the agenda item would begin with the report of the Under-Secretary-General and be followed by the general debate. The word "followed" should not be taken to mean that the general debate had to begin immediately after the report, at the same meeting.

Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (continued) (A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1 and L.9/Rev.1)

86. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the draft resolution on the agenda item (A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1) and the statement on its programme budget implications (A/C.4/55/L.9/Rev.1).

87. *Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1 was adopted.*

88. **The Chairman** announced that the Committee had thus completed its consideration of the agenda item.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.